

Message Text

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16-43

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SY-05

MCT-01 DHA-02 /064 W

----- 071225

P 101105Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2282

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 3131

C R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT-PARA 2)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BM

SUBJ: COUP PLOT TRIAL BEGINS; GEN. TIN OO ACCUSED

1. A PRE-TRIAL HEARING FOR THE ACCUSED COUP PLOTTERS WAS HELD AT INSEIN JAIL SEPTEMBER 10 WITH ABOUT 60 INVITED JOURNALISTS PRESENT (INCLUDING A USIS FSL). TO THE SURPRISE OF ALMOST EVERYONE IN RANGOON, GENERAL TIN OO, FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER AND CHIEF OF STAFF, WAS AMONG THE ACCUSED. (HE WAS ARRESTED SEPTEMBER 3.) THE TRIAL IS TO BE CIVILIAN RATHER THAN MILITARY, EVEN THOUGH ALL OF THE ACCUSED ARE MILITARY OFFICERS.

2. CHARGED AS LEADERS OF THE CONSPIRACY UNDER THE HIGH TREASON ACT AND A BSPP SPECIAL ACT CONCERNING PLOTS TO DESTROY THE PARTY WERE CAPTAIN OHN KYAW MYINT, THE FORMER PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO PRESENT DEFENSE MINISTER AND CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL KYAW HTIN (OHN KYAW MYINT IS ONE OFFICER WHO SOUGHT ASYLUM AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE JULY 2), AND CAPTAIN WIN THEIN, FORMER PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO WESTERN COMMAND COMMANDER COLONEL MIN GAUNG. CHARGED AS ACCOMPLICES WERE MAJOR SEIN MYINT, CONFIDENTIAL

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FORMER DEFENSE MINISTRY CAMP COMMANDANT;

CAPT BA CHIT, FORMER PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO DEPUTY MINISTER OF MINES COLONEL THAN TIN; AND A CAPTAIN TUN KYAW. CHARGED UNDER A SECTION OF THE HIGH TREASON ACT CONCERNING HAVING KNOWLEDGE OF A PLOT AGAINST THE STATE AND WITHHOLDING THE INFORMATION WERE GENERAL TIN OO; COLONEL HLA PE, FORMER COMMANDER OF THE NORTHERN COMMAND; AND CAPTAIN SAN KYI, A FORMER INSTRUCTOR AT THE MAYMYO DEFENSE SERVICES ACADEMY. OTHER OFFICERS WHO WERE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE PLOT (THE BURMESE PRESS REPORTED 14 IN ALL, AND THERE WERE ACTUALLY MANY OTHERS) ARE APPARENTLY NOT TO BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL, AT LEAST NOT YET.

3. IN THE ACCUSATION, READ BY A POLICE SUPERINTENDENT, IT WAS CHARGED THAT THE CONSPIRATORS PLANNED TO ASSASSINATE PRESIDENT NE WIN AND BSPP GENERAL SECRETARY GENERAL SAN YU, AND TO FORM A MILITARY REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL LED BY GENERAL TIN OO WHICH WOULD ABOLISH THE BSPP AND ADOPT A NEW FOREIGN POLICY. WHEN THE SUPERINTENDENT READ THAT THE CONSPIRACY LEADERS HAD VISITED THE HOUSES OF GENERAL TIN OO AND COLONEL HLA PE ON MANY OCCASIONS TO PLOT THE COUP, GENERAL TIN OO BECAME ANGRY AND SHOUTED "THAT'S NOT TRUE."

4. ALL OF THE ACCUSED BUT THE TWO ALLEGED CONSPIRACY LEADERS WERE TOLD THAT THEY WOULD BE ALLOWED TO HIRE THEIR OWN LAWYERS TO DEFEND THEM IF THEY WISHED. GENERAL TIN OO SAID HE WOULD DO SO.

5. AFTER THE JUDGES ANNOUNCED THAT THE TRIAL WOULD BEGIN SEPTEMBER 15, GENERAL TIN OO ROSE TO REQUEST MORE TIME TO PREPARE HIS DEFENSE, NOTING THAT THE CASE IS VERY IMPORTANT AND THAT ESPECIALLY SINCE THE TRIAL IS BEING OBSERVED BY FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IT SHOULD BE FAIR AND SYSTEMATIC. HIS REQUEST WAS DENIED.

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6. AS HE WAS BEING LED OUT OF THE COURTROOM, GENERAL TIN OO WAS ASKED BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH IF HE NEEDED ANYTHING IN HIS CELL TO MAKE IT MORE COMFORTABLE. GENERAL TIN OO REPLIED THAT HE WANTED BOOKS, "BUT NO SOCIALIST BOOKS. I'VE READ ENOUGH OF THEM. I WOULD ESPECIALLY LIKE 'THE RISE AND FALL OF THE THIRD REICH,'" OSBORN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PERSONNEL, CORRUPTION, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, TRIALS, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976RANGOO03131
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760349-0802, D760342-0320
From: RANGOON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760973/aaaacjvx.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 MAY 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <15 SEP 2004 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: COUP PLOT TRIAL BEGINS; GEN. TIN OO ACCUSED
TAGS: PINT, PINS, BM, (TIN OO), (OHN KYAW), (OHN KYAW MYINT)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006